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March 21, 2018

Honorable Mike McGuire
Chair, Senate Governance and Finance Committee
California State Capitol, Room 408
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-322-0298

Sent via Fax & Email

Re: Senate Bill 946 (Lara)

Dear Chair McGuire and committee members:

I write this letter on behalf of the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education (UCLA Labor Center), as an academic expert on issues relating to sidewalk vending. Currently, I am Project Director of the UCLA Labor Center, which is part of the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE). As part of my employment with the UCLA Labor Center, I serve as Professor of Labor Studies for the UCLA Minor in Labor and Workplace Studies where I teach classes relating to low-wage workers, immigration and the labor movement. In addition to my position with the UCLA Labor Center, I am a Lecturer in Law at UCLA Law School, where since 2012 I have co-taught a class entitled, *Community Lawyering and Low-Wage Worker Organizing*. Based on my background and experience, I consider myself a UCLA academic and legal scholar in the area of labor and immigration, low-wage work, and the rights of low-wage workers. I have published extensively in these areas and many academics and policy experts have quoted and cited to my sources in numerous publications. For the past few years, I have focused my work on sidewalk vending and the issues impacting sidewalk vendors.

Our research shows that tens of thousands of people across the state work as sidewalk vendors - selling delicious food and offering sought-after merchandise on public sidewalks and in public parks. As an expert on the low-wage workforce, I can attest to the fact that many immigrant families excluded from other opportunities in the formal economy, turn to sidewalk vending for their economic survival. Moreover, safe and regulated sidewalk vending is also an integral part



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of the fabric of our communities. Studies have demonstrated that sidewalk vending generates millions in local and state tax revenue as vendors buy supplies from local businesses and circulate money in communities that are often ignored by mainstream capital. In many food desert communities, fruit and vegetable vendors are the only source of healthy food retail available.

Despite the immense value to our communities, however, sidewalk vending is unfairly criminalized in cities and counties across California. Some jurisdictions impose an outright prohibition on sidewalk vending, while others impose onerous restrictions that severely limit vending and force workers into the informal economy. As a result, many sidewalk vendors face a harrowing catch-22: permits are impossible to obtain, but vending without a permit is prosecuted as a crime – often a misdemeanor. As a result, hardworking entrepreneurs who provide necessary goods are treated as criminals.

The criminalization of sidewalk vending has significant and devastating consequences, especially in immigrant communities. Vendors charged with a misdemeanor can face penalties of six months in jail and \$1,000 in fines, as well as the potential seizure of personal property. One misdemeanor charge can have devastating effects on entire families that rely on the vendor's income to pay rent and put food on the table. Some immigrant vendors face the risk of being transferred to, or picked up by federal immigration officials after being released from custody. Moreover, some vendors may be at heightened risk for deportation even if they are not ultimately charged or convicted.

Based on my knowledge and research on the industry of sidewalk vending, we propose policy recommendations like SB 946 to response to these injustices relating to decriminalization of sidewalk vendors. SB 946 would move us towards decriminalizing sidewalk vending, while at the same time allow local jurisdictions to continue to enforce vending rules though non-criminal administrative fines and procedures. SB 946 also encourages local jurisdictions to adopt local sidewalk vending permitting regulations that will protect public safety while promoting entrepreneurship and economic mobility. By encouraging local jurisdictions to support and properly regulate sidewalk vending, SB 946 will help protect California's low-income immigrants and workers, promote safe and regulated vending, and create new opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic mobility throughout the state.

It is my hope that you will find the information in this letter useful as you move forward to consider SB 946 and its impact on sidewalk vendors and their families throughout California.



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If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 213-480-4154ext. 209, or at vnarro@irle.ucla.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Victor Narro", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Victor Narro
Project Director, UCLA Labor Center
Professor, UCLA Department of Labor and Workplace Studies
Lecturer in Law, UCLA School of Law